

# **Nathanael Greene's Implementation of Compound Warfare During the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution**

**A Monograph  
by  
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# **SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES**

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During the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution

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## ABSTRACT

Nathanael Greene's Implementation of Compound Warfare During the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution by MAJ Todd J Johnson, U.S. Army, 40 pages.

This monograph is an analysis and evaluation of Major General Nathanael Greene's implementation of compound warfare in the Southern Department from December 1780 until the British surrender at Yorktown in October 1781. Major General Greene was appointed as the new commander of the Southern Department in December 1780 following the Continental Army's catastrophic defeat at the Battle of Camden. Greene's arrival signaled a new beginning for American efforts in the South. Charged with the Herculean task of confronting an enemy that was better equipped and in control of the major sea ports of the region, Greene devised a strategy that would counter British control of the Carolinas and Georgia. He decided to cultivate an operational relationship with the partisan leaders in the region. Greene accomplished this by first writing his vision of partisans working with regular troops and then implementing this strategy over a short period of time. By working with the partisans Greene received three major services in return. The partisans collected copious amounts of operational and tactical intelligence on the British, they prevented the British from operating unhindered in the region, and they were significant warfighters in combined operations with Continental troops.

Greene's inspired leadership, coupled with his utilization of the partisan forces under men like Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter and Andrew Pickens, led to the Americans taking control of a vital region a scant ten months after he took command. Greene defeated the British by first implementing a strategy of exhaustion during his retreat to the Dan River in early 1780. Following his successful retreat Greene then took advantage of his partisans and conventional forces mobility by destroying British outposts and lines of communication in South Carolina and Georgia. The end result was the British were rendered ineffective in the interior of these colonies and they were forced to take refuge in Virginia where they later surrendered at Yorktown.

This monograph demonstrates that Greene was one of the most effective American generals during the course of the American Revolution because of his willingness to work with partisans and his ability to fight the British on his terms. Major General Nathanael Greene was a bold and audacious commander who implemented a strategy that resulted in victory in the Southern Department of the United States.

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## Introduction

All men have a right to remain in the state of nature as long as they please; and in case of intolerable oppression, civil or religious, to leave the society they belong to, and enter into another<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Adams

American involvement in Iraq over the last few years has spurred a renaissance of interest in insurgencies and how to combat insurgents. Many leaders in today's United States military believe that insurgencies are a relatively recent phenomenon in the annals of the nation's history. These professionals may look to their nation's experience in the Philippines in the late 1800s, Vietnam in the 1960s or maybe even Central America in the 1980s. These officers and non-commissioned officers may read books about how other nations have handled counterinsurgency like *How to Eat Soup With a Knife* by John Nagl or *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* by David Galula. They may even read one of the Army's newest manuals, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, in search of the most effective ways to defeat a counterinsurgency.<sup>2</sup>

However, following these paths will cause them to ignore the accomplishments of one of our nation's best soldiers and one of the world's best counterinsurgents. The campaign of Major General Nathanael Greene in the Southern Department during the American Revolution is recognized as being one of the most successful insurgencies in history and worthy of much study. Greene led an army to victory despite being outmanned and outresourced by his British counterparts. His creativity and willingness to implement new ideas into the American Revolution significantly changed the complexion of the war in the south and enabled the United States to win the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists", The Report of the Committee of Correspondence to the Boston Town Meeting, Nov. 20, 1772, Old South Leaflets no. 173 (Boston: Directors of the Old South Work, 1906) 7: 417.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the 21 vignettes in FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, not one concerns Major General Nathanael Greene or the British failure to defeat American forces.

Rarely in the history of American combat has one man had such a significant impact on the outcome of a war as Greene did during the eight-year War of Independence. This native of Rhode Island and Quaker by birth arguably ranks as one of the greatest military leaders in the pantheon of American warfare. Greene synchronized the efforts of his regular forces with the actions of partisan warriors against the British from December of 1780 until October of 1781. Major General Nathanael Greene's leadership and vision enabled the Continental Army of the Southern Department to emerge victorious and catapult the United States of America into worldwide prominence.

A scant ten months after Greene took command his adversaries were in the throes of defeat at Yorktown, Virginia. Greene, who often times is cited as having never won a major battle, realized the importance of never engaging in a conventional battle with the British where he could not emerge with the majority of his army (national, state, and local) and his strategic mission intact.<sup>3</sup> Even though he wrote, "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again." Greene was not dismayed with leaving a battlefield in the hands of the British as long as his men made the British pay dearly for the terrain.<sup>4</sup> His combined forces fought effectively at major engagements, like Guilford Court House, Ninety-Six, and Eutaw Springs. His understanding of war rested on his knowledge of tactics.<sup>5</sup> He always understood that his mission was never to get decisively engaged with the forces of General Charles Cornwallis. Put another way, he was, "a cool strategist of the first order..."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Baxley, "Gen. Nathanael Greene Coming to Symposium," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 4 (April 2006): 3.

<sup>4</sup> Greene to La Luzerne, Camp near Camden [S.C], 28 April, 1781 in Dennis Conrad, ed., *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, Volume 8, 30 March-10 July 1781 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 167. (Hereafter PNG, Volume 8.)

<sup>5</sup> Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 464.

<sup>6</sup> John Buchanon, *The Road to Guilford Court House: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997), 380.

A key component to this strategy was Greene's operational relationship with the local partisans. His partisan and conventional forces operated in concert with one another and eventually came to dominate and influence the key interior terrain while pushing their opponent to the edge of the ocean and out of the countryside.<sup>7</sup>

Another major element of Greene's approach was his ability to take advantage of British weaknesses. The primary weakness of the British efforts in the south was the inability of their leadership to understand the true nature of the conflict in the south. Cornwallis and his superior to the north, Major General Henry Clinton, viewed operations in the south as a shaping operation in the overall campaign. The endstate being that a victory in the south would enable the British to put pressure on George Washington and his forces in the north. While the British consistently outnumbered their Patriot opponents, they could never maneuver enough manpower in the region to combat the efforts of Greene's regulars and his partisans. By seeking to destroy Greene in pitched battle, the British failed to appreciate that to be decisive Greene only had to survive with his main army intact.

The expansion of the conflict also illustrates the British failure to evolve with their antagonist. The British leaders at the strategic level in the Southern Department, men like Cornwallis and Clinton, never grasped the importance of engaging the local populations that were primarily neutral. Prior to the arrival of large elements of British forces in 1780, there were large swaths of the south that were in the midst of a civil war. This conflict was contested between those who supported the Crown (Loyalists and Tories) and those who advocated independence from the Mother Country. Stuck in the middle of this conflict was the majority of the populace in these areas who found themselves supporting whoever could bring order and peace to their

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<sup>7</sup> Baxley, 4.

region. Unfortunately for the British they mistook pacification in an area for dominance. This misinterpretation of the facts would have deadly consequences for the redcoats.

Greene and his forces, both conventional and irregular, understood that their operations must be practicable and expedient in order to be decisive. This strategy matured throughout Greene's tenure and eventually led to the Americans forcing British troops to the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. That is the reason that Greene focused on operations that would capitalize on his partisan's knowledge of local terrain and their ability to take advantage of British vulnerabilities in logistics and their over reliance on Loyalist forces.

The partisans provided three major services for Greene. First, they collected copious amounts of operational and tactical intelligence. They provided Greene with massive amounts of information on British troop and supply movements in the region. Secondly, these partisan allies prevented Greene's force from being surprised by the British by campaigning throughout the Carolinas, especially during Continental retreat to Virginia in early 1781. Lastly, they proved to be significant warfighters against British Regular and Loyalist forces. This proved to be important since many senior British officers and officials were pinning their hopes on Loyalist forces to successfully eliminate American partisan efforts.<sup>8</sup> Successful assaults and sieges against British outposts and communications permitted Greene to preserve other personnel and resources for major battles.<sup>9</sup>

This monograph investigates the successful operational relationship that Major General Greene enjoyed with partisan groups in the Carolina region during the American Revolution. It also examines the vitally important history of the Carolina region in the years preceding Greene's command. The numerous conflicts that took place in those years, ranging from the political to the

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Georgia* (San Jose, California: toExcel Press, 1987), 249.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 169.

military to the economic, indelibly shaped the psyche of the entire Carolina populace. It was this group of men who would later serve in the partisan and militia formations that Greene directly relied upon to achieve victory in the South. This monograph argues that Greene was triumphant because of his implementation of compound warfare. Compound warfare is defined as military actions that combine regular and irregular forces.<sup>10</sup>

Greene first applied compound warfare by understanding the nature of the conflict in the Carolina region. His understanding into the motives of partisan leaders like Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens enabled him to capitalize on the abilities of these men. Secondly, Greene was a highly effective communicator with his irregular leaders through the use of letters or meetings. He directed and coordinated innovative operations with partisans throughout his tenure by writing numerous letters and orders that focused on making sure that all efforts against British interests were synchronized.

Lastly, Greene successfully integrated the efforts of his irregular and regular forces when possible. Examples include Greene tasking his Continental troops with partisan groups to destroy or harass key, vulnerable British assets and forts located in the area of operation. His flexible command and control style empowered his regulars to work with partisan troops in order to achieve a higher goal. Greene's successes as a leader of conventional and unconventional warriors in an insurgency provide many valuable lessons the United States can apply in today's complex operating environment.

## **Background**

In order to better understand the theater of operations Greene was taking over it is important to examine the actions that took place prior to his arrival. Before we can explore the

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Huber, ed., *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002), 1.

actions of Major General Nathanael Greene in the Southern Department it is vitally important to examine the history of the Carolina region in the years preceding the American Revolution. The numerous conflicts that took place in those years, ranging from the political to the military to the economic, indelibly shaped the psyche of the entire Carolina populace. It was this group of men who would later serve in the partisan and militia formations that Greene directly relied upon to achieve victory in the South.

The region that would become the Carolinas was claimed originally by John Cabot for the British Crown in 1497. However, no real settling of the area took place until King Charles II's decision to grant the lands to eight of his most loyal supporters, one of those being Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper.<sup>11</sup> The first colonists settled in the Carolina region in 1670 around the newly named Ashley River. The colony's boundaries encompassed what later became modern day North Carolina (1691), South Carolina (1732), and Georgia (1732).

The primary settlements in the Carolina region were modeled on Cooper's belief in a country ideology and the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina. The Constitutions were documents that, "sought to structure society and government so that rule by an elite composed of public spirited men of independent property would be the natural result."<sup>12</sup> As a result, in the late seventeenth century most settlements were along the coast and dominated by a large, planter elite.

These planters were focused on creating an agrarian economy. They were struggling to make ends meet until they learned how to successfully cultivate rice. This success is often attributed to the importation of slaves since they knew how to "plant, cultivate, harvest and thresh

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<sup>11</sup> William J. Cooper, Jr and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Robert M. Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For": An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., Vol 26, No 4 (Oct. 1969), 479.

rice.”<sup>13</sup> Another crop that created wealth for these planters was indigo, a tropical plant that could be made into a dye.

As the years passed the colonies grew and the make-up of the populace started to change dramatically. The influx of Dutch, French Huguenots, Irish Protestants, Germans and Scots-Irish in the early to mid 1700s really changed the complexion of the Carolina region. The main draw for all of these groups was the availability of land and they were anxious to start new lives and eager to control their own destiny. The push into the frontier region of the Carolinas had begun.<sup>14</sup>

These early settlers of the Carolina region were in the vanguard of a change that would forever alter the landscape of the region. With little or no regard for those settlers who came before them, these new settlers flooded the Carolina region via the Appalachian valleys. This lack of streamlined colonization led to practically no authority existing on the outer fringes of the colony. This influx of settlers created a region that was ripe for corruption, human abuse and societal strife.

The main group of people being affected by this influx of people was the Native American tribes of the region. Approximately twenty tribes inhabited the area to include the Westoe, Yemassee, Tuscarora, Chickasaw, Cherokee and Edisto.<sup>15</sup> Conflict with these tribes was inevitable and in 1680 the first bullets were fired. The hostilities really began to take shape in 1716 when in North Carolina the Tuscarora initiated a campaign against English settlements. Militias formed in both the North and South Carolina regions and the Indian uprising was destroyed. However, this was just the beginning of problems between the Native Americans and the new settlers.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 224.

<sup>15</sup> LCDR Kristin Jacobsen, “Conduct of the Partisan War in the Revolutionary War South”, (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 29.

Campaigns against Indians became the norm in the region and many atrocities occurred on both sides. In his remarkable history about South Carolina, David Ramsey writes that things got so bad in the region that bounties were put on Indians or that if they were taken as a prisoner they would be sold into slavery.<sup>16</sup> This hate of Native Americans was continued when the Carolina colonies supported the English Crown in their fight against the French during the Seven Years War. Many southern men who would later fight in the American Revolution actively participated in this conflict. Men like Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter would learn valuable lessons of how to adapt traditional European Warfare to the wilds of the frontier.

The tenuous situation between the Indians and the Carolina populace was not the only societal problem existing during this timeframe. The settlers of the region were having problems amongst themselves. As communities formed on the outskirts of the frontier, the lack of civil structure was becoming more evident. Many of the residents living in the “Backcountry” were frustrated by a perceived lack of concern among the colonial government to their problems. These problems were further exacerbated by the fact that the law of the Carolina resided in the Common House of Assembly.

This law making body was primarily comprised of the upper strata of the planter populous that lived on the coastal Carolina region.<sup>17</sup> The way that the colony was divided made it virtually impossible for those living in the backcountry to participate in the political affairs of the colony. The members of the Common House were totally indifferent to the problems facing those colonists who lived in the backcountry. This in turn led to the newly settled areas being

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<sup>16</sup> David Ramsey, *History of South Carolina from Its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year of 1808*. Vol 1 and 2. South Carolina Heritage Series. (Newbury, S.C.: W.J. Duffie, 1858. Reprint, Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1959), 89.

<sup>17</sup> Jacobsen, 14.

completely devoid of law enforcement and an atmosphere of disenfranchisement was created amongst the settlers.

A radical movement soon took hold in the backcountry of the Carolinas. The Regulator movement was spearheaded by those colonists who felt that they had to take issues into their own hands. The Regulator movement soon took hold in both North and South Carolina but for different reasons. In North Carolina the Regulator movement was focused on eliminating the cronyism that existed between the colonial and local government. The Regulator members from North Carolina were extremely frustrated with the established circuit and local court systems since cronyism was rampant. An example of this was the fact that the county clerk of pleas, the official colonial court, appointed local clerks and sheriffs. The county clerk, appointed by the Royal Governor, also determined taxes in the colonies. He was naturally inclined to appoint people who had no moral problem collecting taxes from the rather cash-strapped population occupying the new settled areas of the Carolinas.<sup>18</sup>

The Regulator movement soon became so frustrated with the power wielded by the county clerks and local sheriffs that they officially petitioned the colonial government for redress. Their written pleas, submitted over a period of two years, fell on deaf ears and the Regulators decided to finally take action on their own by disrupting local courts and fending off sheriffs on tax collection duty. The area soon fell into chaos and the colonial government realized that it had a major problem on its hands. The situation reached its nadir at the Battle of Alamance in 1771 in which a group of 2,000 Regulators (half of them being armed) took on approximately 1,000 colonial militia.<sup>19</sup> The colonial militia ended up being victorious on the battlefield that day and

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<sup>18</sup> John Spencer Bassett, *The Regulators of North Carolina (1765-1771)*. Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1894. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C: 146-147, accessed on 9 January 2007); [available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/bassett95/bassett95.html>; Internet

<sup>19</sup> William Edwards Fitch, *Some neglected history of North Carolina : being an account of the*

those members of the Regulator movement soon found themselves on the receiving end of some incredibly harsh repression by the victors to include the execution of seven leaders. The Regulator movement gradually faded away but the hard feelings that were created between the settlers of the interior and the colonial government continued to smolder for years.

During the same time frame, another Regulator movement was taking hold in South Carolina but for very different reasons. The occupants of the interior in South Carolina were dealing with the threat from the local Cherokee tribes. As white settlers continued their expansion west, they found themselves encroaching on lands that the Cherokee considered their property. Beside the Indian problem, the settlers in this region also had to deal with groups of bandits who took advantage of the newly built but isolated farms and communities. Much like their brethren in North Carolina, the inhabitants of the South Carolina backcountry asked for assistance from their colonial government representatives in 1768 but their requests for help were ignored.

There was also a socio-economic component to the dilemma. The Charleston elites enjoyed a very profitable trade relationship with the Indians and since they controlled much of the government response they were in no hurry to find a solution for the backcountry. The non-response from the colonial government forced the leaders of various backcountry communities to form themselves into Regulator units focused on maintaining some type of law and order. These loosely organized groups patrolled and roamed the remote regions of South Carolina. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the areas, these Regulator movements soon became more focused on dispensing vigilante justice rather than proceeding through the judicial systems

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revolution of the regulators and of the battle of Alamance, the first battle of the American Revolution (New York: Neale Publishing, 1905, 20.

already established.<sup>20</sup> The reason for this frustration was that many backcountry inhabitants felt that the courts were controlled by the low country elites and would only serve their interests.

The General Assembly of South Carolina eventually realized that they would have to become involved in this festering problem. The Assembly decided to arrest those Regulator leaders who they felt was creating the unrest. Unfortunately, the men they sent to arrest the leaders were not well liked by the rest of the populace. In some cases, the Regulators arrested those people sent to arrest them. The Assembly finally addressed the issues of the Regulators by setting up a new judicial system in 1769.<sup>21</sup> However, irreparable damage was done to the relationship between the two factions. These feelings of ill-will would continue to permeate the Carolina colonies for many years to come.

Even after the Regulator movements, the planters and businessmen who created the plantations and controlled the majority of the wealth continued their dominance of colonial affairs in the Carolina region. The planters considered themselves as an aristocracy and they viewed the farmers of the backcountry as leading a servile existence barely above that of a slave or Cherokee Indian. These views continued to dominate coastal society and finally came to a head when the first shots of the American Revolution were fired.

The decision of an individual to join the ranks of the Patriot or Loyalist cause was the result of many factors. Some of these factors included geography, whether or not new settlers had immigrated as part of a group, their religious preferences or just sheer pragmatism. William Nelson highlighted in his study of Loyalists that, “sympathies were often linked to cultural minorities that became more Patriot as they became more Anglicized.”<sup>22</sup> Regardless of why an

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<sup>20</sup> Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001), 15.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 18.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobsen, 19.

individual decided to support one side or the other, the most important thing to understand is that a member of a community could be a Loyalist while his neighbor may be an ardent Patriot. Each side tried to enlist support from the inhabitants of the Carolina region through a variety of methods, ranging from coercion to enlisting volunteers. The reason for this behavior was that many families living in the area were new arrivals and they were quite apathetic to the entire fight.<sup>23</sup>

Support for the Crown often cut across social lines. “Wealthy seacoast planters and merchants in both Carolinas stood by their king. Many backcountry farmers also supported the royalist cause.”<sup>24</sup> These farmers thought that domination by the Charleston elites was worse than remaining under the rule of the British. Many colonists that sided with the Crown did so because they were a member of a community that had accepted land in return for an allegiance to the King or because they had taken a loyalty oath.

Conversely, the move for American independence in the Carolina region was fostered by a group of merchants and professionals in both the up and low country regions. Patriot leaders leveraged powerful standing organizations like the Continental Association and the Council of Safety to push their ideas. The Continental Association was a group that advocated ideas like a militia that was independent from British control and a policy of non-importation. This group appealed to those who no longer wanted British interference in economic affairs or those individuals just looking to fight the British.

The British Army did not conduct formal operations in the Carolina region from 1777-1778 because they were too busy fighting in the northern states. During this timeframe, many Tory loyalists did not state their preferences for fear of retribution by Whig loyalists.

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<sup>23</sup> John Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782*. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Cooper and Terrill, 87.

Despite this disadvantage, the Tories did a fair job of recruiting men to their cause during this lull. Their cause appealed to the man who had fought against the low country elites in the Regulator movements. To counter this, the leaders of the Patriot movement, primarily low country elites, drew support from the anti-Crown sentiment that existed in pockets of the backcountry. Both sides were able to draw upon the experience of the average inhabitant of the backcountry. The men who fought on both sides had been, “tempered by almost five years of intermittent partisan war.”<sup>25</sup>

The Revolutionary War in southern colonies was largely devoid of large scale engagements until the fall of Savannah, Georgia in December of 1778. Following the capitulation of Savannah, the fighting quickly became a match between regular British regular and Loyalist forces and the American regular forces augmented by partisans and state militias. The fighting in the region soon became a violent and unrestrained series of small battles that evolved into a civil war between groups that either supported the Crown or the thirteen states.

The fighting in South Carolina was brought to a new level of violence following the British victory at Charleston in April of 1780. Sir Henry Clinton, the British Supreme Commander, led the efforts against Charleston and his victory encouraged Loyalist augmentees to exert some of their newfound power against those patriot forces who had been in control of much of the Carolina region for much of the war.<sup>26</sup> Clinton then made a mistake that is often cited by military historians as a turning point in the war. Clinton stated that full civil rights would be given to those subjects that showed complete loyalty to the Crown by either signing or taking an oath. Anybody who refused would be treated as an enemy of the state. Not only did this mark a significant policy change but it served as justification to many British and Loyalist soldiers to commit crimes against those they perceived as being rebels or rebel sympathizers.

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<sup>25</sup> Pancake, 53.

Many neutral inhabitants of the Carolina and Georgia region were affected by this as they suffered at the hands of British forces. Two rebel leaders in particular, General Thomas Sumter and Colonel Andrew Pickens, were drawn back into the struggle against the British after they had their plantations plundered. They and many others started fighting back and the British high command, now under the leadership of Lord Charles Cornwallis, soon found itself not only fighting a conventional war against remnants of the Continental Army but also a guerrilla war in the Carolinas against a patriot, partisan force. “Lacking the mature political structure of New England, the Southern insurgency adopted a military structure.”<sup>27</sup> These partisan and militia groups, under the able leadership of men like Pickens, Sumter, and Marion initiated an independent campaign in the Carolinas against British lines of communication and supply lines. However, their valiant efforts were overshadowed by the defeat of the Continental Army and supporting militias at the Battle of Camden on 16 August 1780.

This defeat for the Continental Army, under the leadership of Major General Horatio Gates, practically spelled the end of conventional resistance in the Carolinas and Georgia. Indeed the only positive news for the American political and military leadership following the debacle at Camden was Francis Marion’s exploits in the northeastern Carolina region. “Marion so effectively thwarted the schemes of the British against South Carolina, that to drive him out of the country was with them [British] a favorite object.”<sup>28</sup> He led successful engagements against the British at Nelson’s Ferry and Black Mingo but he feared his efforts might not be enough to stem British encroachment north. Marion wrote to Gates, “Many of my people has left me & gone

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<sup>26</sup> Lambert, 128.

<sup>27</sup> MAJ Edward Hoffer, “Operational Art and Insurgency War: Nathanael Greene’s Campaign in the Carolinas” (Master’s Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1988), 3.

<sup>28</sup> David Ramsey, *History of South Carolina from Its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year of 1808*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., South Carolina Heritage Series (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1959), 235.

over to the enemy, for they think that we have no Army coming in & have been Deceived, as we hear nothing from you in what manner to act & some assurance to the people of support.”<sup>29</sup>

Things were really looking grim for the American cause when the Battle of King’s Mountain occurred on 7 October 1780. The battle was unique in that the conventional fighting was between Loyalist and partisan forces. The dramatic victory by the patriot force was completely unexpected. It not only stemmed British plans to subject the interior of the Carolinas to British rule but also destroyed the left wing of Cornwallis’ Army. Most importantly, it forced Cornwallis to make the painful decision to halt his operations in North Carolina and move back into South Carolina for reinforcements.

The partisan forces operating out in the Carolina region were the main reason that the British were unable to pursue their plan of occupying North Carolina and eventually Virginia. The British simply did not have enough manpower to cover all of the areas that partisans were operating from. Less than two months after King’s Mountain would see the arrival of an American general who would be able to meld the partisans and militia remnants into his overall campaign plan and lead the Continental Army to victory in the Southern Department.

## **Greene Takes Command**

Nathanael Greene was appointed the new Southern Department Commander on 17 October 1780. Greene’s military experience up to this point in the war had been extensive. Following the outbreak of hostilities in Massachusetts, Greene was appointed as a Brigadier General (May 1775) of Rhode Island’s state troops and he proceeded to march his troops to Boston. On June 22, 1775 Greene was appointed as a Brigadier General in the Continental Army,

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Bass, *Swamp Fox: The Life and and Campaigns of Francis Marion* (Columbia, S.C.: Sandlapper Press, 1959), 97.

making him the youngest general officer in the Army.<sup>30</sup> It was at this juncture of his career where Greene served under General George Washington. Washington was impressed with Greene in their first meeting and the relationship between these two men continued to blossom throughout the early years of the Revolution.

Greene served closely with Washington at many of major battles during the early years of the war to include Trenton and Monmouth. He also experienced the horrors and terrible living conditions at Valley Forge and Morristown. Greene's contributions were considered so valuable to the fledgling American effort that Washington's own secretary wrote early on in the war, "Greene is beyond doubt a first-rate military genius, and one in whose opinions the General [Washington] places the utmost confidence."<sup>31</sup>

Greene was entrusted with different commands under Washington and he served with distinction at the battles of Harlem Heights, Trenton, and Princeton. Greene, who by this time of the war had become one of Washington's most trusted confidants, was sent by his commander in March of 1777 to the Continental Congress to beg for more supplies.

Greene's penchant for outstanding command performances continued as he performed exceptionally well at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. He then marched with Washington to spend the winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. It was at Valley Forge where Greene's skill in requisitioning supplies made him an invaluable resource to Washington.<sup>32</sup> His feats at Valley Forge destined Greene to his next assignment.

Washington's belief in Greene's leadership and organizational skills was so great that he appointed him Quartermaster General of Continental Army in March of 1778. Greene excelled in this post but longed to return to a field command. The Quartermaster Department was in a

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<sup>30</sup> Terry Golway, *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

shambles and Washington knew that Greene was just the right man to clean it up and make it a functioning entity. It is interesting to note that Greene, who in addition to serving as Quartermaster General, was still a valued member of Washington's war council. He continued in his attempts to reorganize the Quartermaster Department throughout his tenure. He also became responsible for the establishment of camp sites and this enabled him to be an expert in judging and appreciating the importance of terrain. As one historian wrote, "...he had to become especially sensitive to such factors as the availability of water, wood, drainage and suitability for defense."<sup>33</sup>

Also during this timeframe he commanded troops at the battles of Monmouth Court House and Rhode Island. His amazing ability to balance a multitude of responsibilities was best exemplified when he was chosen to command the front line at the Battle of Connecticut Farms while still serving as Quartermaster General. It was at this juncture of his career that Greene was beginning to feel underappreciated, especially by those members of the Continental Congress. Greene was not given a vote of confidence by Congress in July of 1780 and submitted his resignation on 26 July.<sup>34</sup>

Greene could have disappeared completely from the scene had not Washington come to his rescue. Washington, realizing that Greene was one of the best commanders in the Continental Army and that the outcome of the war was still very much in doubt, appointed Greene to oversee the military trial of British Major John Andre. Following the conviction of Andre, Washington then appointed Greene to take over the command of Hudson Highlands Department. Washington was waiting for the right moment to move his favorite officer and that chance came on 14

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>33</sup> Dan L. Morrill, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* (Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1996), 115.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Vinton Greene, *General Greene* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), 151.

October 1780 when the Commander of the Continental Army recommended that Greene become the next Southern Department Commander.

His wish for field command was soon granted when he was appointed in November 1780. As he traveled from New York to North Carolina to assume command he kept in mind the words of George Washington who wrote him on 22 October 1780 shortly after he was appointed to his new command. “You will therefore proceed without delay to the Southern army, now in North Carolina, and take the command accordingly.” Washington continued, “I can give you no particular instructions but must leave you to govern yourself intirely according to your own prudence and judgment and circumstances in which you will find yourself.”<sup>35</sup>

Washington understood that the British were implementing a change in strategy by mobilizing more troops into the southern theater. He expected Greene to counter this new chapter in the war by whatever means possible. Greene stated his intentions for his new when he wrote Washington on 31 October.

How to employ our little force if we are attacked both in Virginia and North Carolina at the same time is difficult to determine. My first object will be to Equip a flying army to consist of about eight hundred horse and one thousand Infantry. This force with the occasional aid of the militia will serve to confine the enemy in their limits and render it difficult for them to subsist in the interior country.<sup>36</sup>

Greene highlights his broader strategy later on in the same letter when he writes, “I see but little prospect of getting a force to contend with the enemy upon equal grounds and therefore must make the most of a kind of partizan war untill we can levy and equip a larger force.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Washington to Greene, Prekaness, the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1780, in Richard K. Showman, ed. *The Papers of Nathanael Greene, Volume 6 1 June 1780-25 December 1780*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993): 424. (Hereafter cited as *PNG*, Vol 6)

<sup>36</sup> Greene to Washington, Philadelphia, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 6, 448.

<sup>37</sup> Greene to Washington, Philadelphia, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 6, 448.

The importance of the southern theater and the precarious situation that Greene was to inherit from Gates cannot be understated. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee, the prominent cavalry commander in the region, wrote that if the British were to achieve victory in the south, “the Carolinas and Georgia would inevitably become members of the British Empire.” He continued to write that if the British made their way into Virginia that, “the country south of the James River...would be ground to dust and ashes.”<sup>38</sup>

Greene understood that war in the southern part of the United States would be waged on a continual basis. Unlike his experiences in the North, Greene realized that the weather in the Carolinas would offer no respite from attacks by Cornwallis and his force of 8,000 men.<sup>39</sup> He would have to rely upon partisan forces available until he had the time and resources to recruit for the Continental force. He knew that leveraging partisan support would enable him to outnumber his opponent and enable him to implement a strategy of exhaustion. “His primary campaign plan was to initiate a harassing and nuisance raids to such an extent that the enemy would be rendered immobile and forced to defend its current positions rather than beginning new conquests.”<sup>40</sup> However, other key factors weighed on Greene’s decision to wage compound warfare against the British.

Major General Greene, in his first independent command, wasn’t so foolhardy as to not ask for assistance from those who had been fighting the British for years. This openness to accept input from others was a character trait of Greene’s that dated to his years as a youth when he eagerly befriended individuals who were better educated than himself. A perfect example of this was his relationship with the minister and later president of Yale University, Ezra Stiles. The two

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<sup>38</sup>Henry Lee, *The Revolutionary War Memoirs of General Henry Lee* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1998; reprint, 1), 247.

<sup>39</sup>Golway, 231.

<sup>40</sup>Hugh F. Rankin, *Greene and Cornwallis: The Campaigns in the Carolinas* (Raleigh, N.C.: Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1976), 4-5.

became good friends as Stiles mentored the young Greene and expanded his exposure to popular books and thoughts of the day. This relationship was the foundation of Greene's ability to learn and be receptive to ideas from others.

The geography and lack of Continental political authority in much of the region also contributed to Greene's acceptance of partisan forces. The southern theater of operations consisted of numerous hills, swamps, rivers and streams that criss-crossed the region. Greene, who studied numerous maps of the area, appreciated the fact that he didn't know all of the key terrain in the region. He understood that the triumvirate of partisan leaders operating in the area (Marion, Sumter, and Pickens) had the best understanding of the lay of the land. Eventually the three would be known better by their nicknames of The Swamp Fox, the Gamecock and the Wizard Owl.<sup>41</sup>

Each one of these men operated in a distinct section of South Carolina (Low Country, Midlands, and Up Country) and Greene utilized their local knowledge of the three main river systems in the region: the Pee Dee, the Santee, and the Savannah.<sup>42</sup> Greene also valued their service since the state governments of Georgia and South Carolina were essentially in the hands of the British. As one author stated, "...these mobile, effective, and often ruthless citizen soldiers were the bulwark of the faltering American cause."<sup>43</sup>

In the early years of the war the leaders of the Patriot cause in the Carolina region did an exceptional job of outworking and out organizing their opponent. The leaders of the Patriot movement were able to appeal to the anti-Crown sentiment that pervaded much of the region. They were able to draw upon the experience of the average inhabitant of the backcountry. The

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<sup>41</sup> Karl G. Heider, "The Gamecock, the Swamp Fox, and the Wizard Owl: The Development of Good Form in an American Totemic Set," *The Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 367 (1980): 3.

<sup>42</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Golway, 233.

inhabitant of the backcountry was a tough and rugged individual who valued his freedom and knew how to survive in the roughest of environments.

The partisan fighting in the south was based upon four main characteristics. The first was that the Southerner was an Indian fighter and hunter. This inhabitant more than likely had some experience in either fighting against some of the twenty different tribes that lived in the area, had served in the French and Indian War or had been a member of his states militia. Second, the partisan force had only their personal arms and whatever they could capture. Third, they were inseparable from their horses.

Lastly, the partisans lived primarily in the wilderness of the region.<sup>44</sup> The individuals who fell into this category and later fought for Greene reads like a who's who of the militia and partisan cause. Thomas Sumter was a member of the Virginia militia; Andrew Pickens, William Moultrie and Francis Marion in the South Carolina militia and William Richardson Davie in the North Carolina militia.<sup>45</sup>

These men, and many of their counterparts, learned hard lessons while serving in their respective militias and living in the backcountry of the Carolina region. The biggest lesson learned was how to adapt traditional tactics to the wilds of the frontier. They learned and implemented new tactics while fighting Indians and themselves. “At a time when the armies of Europe fought more limited wars, Europeans and Americans assumed the frontier attitude when fighting in the colonies.”<sup>46</sup>

Another reason why Greene felt it important to ingratiate himself to the partisans was strictly the nature of the war in South. Much of Cornwallis’ force structure in the Southern

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<sup>44</sup> Jac Weller, "Irregular but Effective: Partizan Weapons Tactics in the American Revolution, Southern Theatre," *Military Affairs*, Autumn 1957, 120.

<sup>45</sup> LCDR Kristen Jacobsen, “Conduct of the Partisan War in the Revolutionary South” (Master’s Thesis, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Department consisted of Tories, who were Americans that sided with the cause of the British. These Tories freed up British regular troops to conduct other operations in the region. Greene came to the conclusion that his partisan forces knew the strengths and weaknesses of these Tory forces and that they would be able to leverage their knowledge of the region to make the Tories a less effective fighting force.

## Compound Warfare In the South

One of the premier partisan force leaders when Greene took command was Francis Marion. Marion had been fighting the British since the onset of hostilities at the battle for Sullivan's Island and was commissioned as a Lieutenant Colonel in Second South Carolina Regiment of the U.S. Army in September 1776.<sup>47</sup> Following the British capture of Charleston on 12 May 1780, the 47 year old Marion had waged a guerilla, hit and run style of war against British Regular and Tory troops. Marion's men took advantage of the wooded areas and hard clay roads that enabled them to conduct lightning quick ambushes and attacks against the British at any time. His men made great efforts to only forage for supplies that they needed.<sup>48</sup>

Marion was recognized as an exceptional leader who took great pride in barring any member of his militia from plundering. His two greatest strengths were his ability to control his men and gain intelligence. He had informers throughout the Pedee and Santee Regions. "Hardly a thing could happen anywhere in the entire section that he did not know about it within a matter of hours."<sup>49</sup> Marion's operations against the British were so effective that his opponent, Banastre Tarleton, wrote, "Mr. Marion, by his zeal and abilities, showed himself capable of the trust

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Baxley, "Francis Marion's Continental Army Commission," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 6,7,8 (June, July, August 2006): 12.

<sup>48</sup> Buchanon, 396.

<sup>49</sup> Jac Weller, "The Irregular War in the South," *Military Affairs*, Autumn 1960, 135.

committed to his charge. The alarm occasioned by these insurrections frequently retarded supplies on their way to the army.”<sup>50</sup>

Greene respected Marion’s efforts and stated as much when he wrote him shortly after taking command. “Your services in the lower Part of South Carolina...have been very important and it is my earnest desire that you continue. I like your Plan of frequently shifting your Ground. It frequently presents a Surprize and perhaps a total Loss of your Party. Until a more permanent Army can be collected than is in the Field at present we must endeavour to keep up a Partizan War...”<sup>51</sup>

Another major partisan leader of the time, Thomas Sumter, was the recipient of a letter from Greene where the new commander wrote that partisan operations, “are most necessary and should not be neglected, and yet, they should not be pursued to the prejudice of more important concerns. You may strike a hundred strokes, and reap little benefit from them, unless you have a good Army to take advantage of your success.”<sup>52</sup>

One of the first command decisions that Greene made was the decision to split his small force on 16 December 1780. His Continental regulars and militia augmentees were running short of food and so Greene decided to divide his army even though he was outmanned by Lord Cornwallis troops. Greene’s rationale for the decision was that Cornwallis would have to move his troops to conduct an attack on one of Greene’s elements. Dividing the army would also relieve pressure on the dwindling supply of logistics that the army was consuming.

Thus would begin arguably the major turning point of the Revolutionary War in the South. The next three months would see such major events as the American victory at Cowpens,

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<sup>50</sup> MAJ Daniel Wilson, “General Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox and Marine Corps Warfighting Doctrine” (Master’s Thesis, U. S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2001), 12.

<sup>51</sup> Greene to Marion, Head Quarters Char[lotte] South Carolina [N.C], Decemr 4<sup>th</sup>, 1780, *PNG*, VI, 520.

<sup>52</sup> John Morgan Dederer, *Making Bricks without Straw: Nathanael Greene’s Campaign and Mao*

the retreat of Greene's troops through North Carolina and the battle at Guilford Court House.

What is often forgotten by many is that Greene utilized his confidence in the partisan forces to relieve pressure from his divided forces and gain intelligence on the movements of British and Tory forces. Greene was very pragmatic in his working relationship with the partisans as he understood these forces could significantly augment his meager resources.

Greene stated his intent for Marion and his men in a letter on 4 December 1780 when he wrote, "At present I am badly off for Intelligence. It is of the highest importance that I get the earliest Information of any Reinforcements which may arrive at Charlestown or leave the Town to join Lord Cornwallis. I wish you therefore to fix some Plan for procuring such Information and for conveying it to me with all possible Dispatch."<sup>53</sup>

Greene also wrote of intelligence matters in a letter to Thomas Sumter on 12 December: "Therefore wish you to keep up a communication of intelligence, and of any changes of disposition that may take place."<sup>54</sup> Greene's thirst for intelligence on his enemy was still at the top of his priority list as his letter on 24 December 1780 to Marion states, "I am this moment favor'd with your letter of the 22d and am happy to hear you have been successful in your skirmish with the enemy." Greene continues, "Intelligence as I wrote you before is every thing to an army; I beg you therefore to take every measure in your power to ascertain the strength and movements of the enemy in Charlestown."<sup>55</sup>

He also entrusted the partisan forces to assist him in his plan to have boats ready to evacuate his troops in case they needed to leave South Carolina. On 4 January 1780, Greene

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*Tse Tung's Mobile Warfare* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1983), 37.

<sup>53</sup> Greene to Marion, Head Quarters Char[lotte] South Carolina [N.C], Decemr 4<sup>th</sup>, 1780, *PNG*, Vol 6, 520.

<sup>54</sup> Greene to Sumter, Camp Charlotte [N.C], Decemr 12<sup>th</sup>, 1780, *PNG*, Vol 6, 564.

<sup>55</sup> Greene to Marion, Haleys Ferry [N.C.], Decem 24<sup>th</sup>, 1780, *PNG*, Vol 6, 607.

asked Marion to find “all the boats fit for transportation down as low towards Georgetown,” collect them and keep them “in readiness” until he hears from himself or his deputy.<sup>56</sup>

Greene’s tact and diplomacy with his partisan allies paid off as he received numerous letters early on in his tenure as Commander of the Southern Department appraising him of British and Tory movements. Numerous written examples abound of Greene receiving timely intelligence updates to include Marion writing to him on 28 December 1780 that he was keeping his patrols by Lynches Creek, “Constantly near the Enemy to watch their movements & prevent foraging.”<sup>57</sup> This vibrant dialogue continued working both ways as Greene wrote Marion on 16 January to let him know that, “By letters from General Sumter I learn Lord Cornwallis was in motion towards Morgan.”<sup>58</sup>

## The Year Of Decision

It is also during this timeframe that Greene began to think about combining his regular and partisan forces to take on vulnerable British detachments. One of the first letters to highlight this innovative thinking is on 15 January 1781 when he writes to his cavalry commander Henry Lee. Greene writes, “Since you left this place, one of General Merrion’s (i.e., Marion’s) people was here, and informd me that Watsons Corps lies upon the Santee at Nelsons Ferry. Please to consult with General Merrion on the subject, and take your measures according”<sup>59</sup>

The Battle of Cowpens took place on 17 January and was concluded in less than one hour. The remarkable and unexpected victory by the Americans, under the able leadership by Daniel Morgan, caused great consternation to the British chain of command, primarily Lord

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<sup>56</sup> Greene to Marion, From Camp on the Pee Dee, S.C., 4 January 1781, in Richard K. Showman, ed. *The Papers of Nathanael Greene, Volume 7 26 December 1780-29 March 1781* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994): 47 (Hereafter cited as *PNG*, Vol 7).

<sup>57</sup> Marion to Greene, Mouth of Lynches Creek, Pee Dee, S.C., 28 December 1780, *PNG*, Vol 7, 13.

<sup>58</sup> Greene to Marion, Camp [on the Pee Dee, S.C.], January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 7, 131.

<sup>59</sup> Greene to Lee, Camp [on the Pee Dee, S.C.], January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 7, 123.

Cornwallis. Hellbent on avenging defeat of one of his most trusted subordinates, Banastre Tarleton, Cornwallis ordered an all out pursuit of Morgan's forces. In order to pursue Morgan with all speed, Cornwallis ordered all of his excess baggage, provisions and wagons to be destroyed. The mission for the British was to destroy Morgan's force before going after Greene's.

Following a firing of muskets and a celebratory drink, Greene began to think about the next stage of the campaign.<sup>60</sup> He understood Cornwallis's intent and decided to take advantage of his opponent's rash decision making. He realized that he must combine his force with Morgan's and lead the British on a high speed chase into North Carolina. In this way he could draw the British away from their supply centers on the coast and make them more vulnerable to attack from his partisan forces. He would also be buying time for his weary and tired troops that numbered no more than 1500 Continentals and some 600 militia.<sup>61</sup>

After holding a council of war with his fellow officers on 9 February, Greene made the decision to leave North Carolina and move to the main Continental supply depots north of the Dan River in Virginia. This was a tough decision for Greene but it was the best one for his army. However, he knew that his forces would be back in North and South Carolina and to that end he wrote Francis Marion on 11 February to let him know that he has asked Sumter to, "call out all the Militia of South Carolina & Employ them in destroying the Enemies Stores & perplexing their Affairs."<sup>62</sup>

Greene's force crossed the Dan River and made their way into Virginia on 14 February, barely ahead of Cornwallis and his pursuing force. Greene and his men then waited patiently as

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<sup>60</sup> Charles Bracelen Flood, *Rise and Fight Again: Perilous Times Along the Road to Independence* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1976), 377.

<sup>61</sup> Golway, 250.

<sup>62</sup> Greene to Marion, From Camp at Guilford Court House, N.C., 11 February 1781, *PNG*, Vol 7, 281.

Cornwallis made the decision to move back into central North Carolina to deliberate his next move and make his strung out force less susceptible to attack from the flanks and rear by roving partisan bands. The Americans had successfully drawn Cornwallis across the desolate pine barrens in the depths of winter and he was suffering.<sup>63</sup> Though Greene was out of North Carolina it wouldn't be for long. The Continental Army re-crossed the Dan River on 22 February and commenced to developing yet another plan to defeat the British.

For the next month the two armies shadowed one another and engaged in constant skirmishing. During this timeframe Greene utilized his partisans and some regular forces to harass British forces operating in the area. Francis Marion and his men cut off British detachments and supplies that were destined for Cornwallis.<sup>64</sup> However, Greene still didn't have enough forces to take on the British in a conventional battle. This changed in early March when he received badly needed regular and militia reinforcements from Virginia and North Carolina. Greene decided now was the time to give battle to the British and he picked the battlefield, the Guilford Court House in North Carolina.

His selection of the battlefield was recognized as good generalship by the notorious British cavalry commander Banastre Tarleton. "The post occupied by General Greene on this occasion was extremely well chosen.... The reasons which now induced him not to decline an engagement equally indicated his wisdom and professional knowledge."<sup>65</sup> Fought on 15 March, the encounter was technically a British victory as they controlled the field of battle at the end of the day. However, the cost for the British was truly appalling. They lost approximately 25% (roughly 500 men) of their force and were in real trouble. They were forced to retreat back to the

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<sup>63</sup> MAJ William P. Western, "General Nathanael Greene in the South 1780-1782: To Lose All the Battles and Win the War" (Master's Thesis, U. S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1987), i.

<sup>64</sup> Cecil B. Hartley, *Heroes and Patriots of the South* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: G.G. Evans, 1860), 148.

<sup>65</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of*

coastal town of Wilmington, North Carolina and regroup. This was exactly the type of opportunity that Greene needed and he was determined to move his troops out of North Carolina and focus on a new set of targets to his south. “It is my intention to attack the enemy the moment we can get up with him. I am agreed in opinion with you that Lord Cornwallis dont wish to fight us, but you may depend it, he will not refuse to fight if we push him.”<sup>66</sup>

Greene at this point of the campaign was beginning to earn the respect and trust of his regular and partisan forces. He was known as a hard-working and dedicated general who shared the mean rations of his troops.<sup>67</sup> Greene’s decision to direct his efforts against Lord Rawdon and the string of British forts in South Carolina was a risky proposition. To facilitate this course of action Greene decided to integrate his regular forces with partisans in order maximize their operational capabilities. Greene’s decision to integrate combat power was based on how successful the partisans had been in his absence. When Greene had retrograded his forces toward Virginia partisan activity increased exponentially in the Carolinas. Marion embarked upon a campaign known as the “Bridges Campaign” where he initiated a series of actions that caused the British numerous casualties and resulted in Marion controlling the majority of the Pee Dee region.<sup>68</sup>

The decision to combine forces raised the morale of partisans who had been laboring away for months and it also gave the two entities a unity of purpose. Greene, understanding that a combined Army and partisan force could change the tide of the war, really focused on coalescing the forces of Continental Cavalry Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee and Marion. His

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*North America* (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1967), 277.

<sup>66</sup> Greene to Lee, Camp at South Buffaloe [N.C.], March 22d, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 7, 461.

<sup>67</sup> John Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 185.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Baxley, “1781, the War Changes, Victory in the South,” *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 10-11 (Oct-Nov 2006): 16.

expectations were that the tandem would implement his strategy of reducing British and Loyalist garrisons in South Carolina.

These garrisons were of vital importance to the British for numerous reasons.

These British forward operating bases formed a regional network for logistics, communication, and control. Generally, each base held a garrison that could send out patrols and demonstrate the presence of Royal authority. British operating bases were places where the British wounded could convalesce, food and supplies could be stored and, rebels could be jailed until tried for their crimes.<sup>69</sup>

These bases served as symbols of Royal power in the backcountry and Greene was determined that they would capitulate if he only applied enough pressure on them.

Lee and Marion had worked together before when they interdicted supply lines along the Pee Dee River in January 1781 and they also had conducted a raid against a British fort at Georgetown, South Carolina in January 1781. Even though the foray into Georgetown was only a minor success, with the combined force taking and paroling several British soldiers, it showcased the abilities of these two men to work as one entity.<sup>70</sup> This merger occurred once again in mid April when Lee, who was screening Marion's main force against Cornwallis, combined forces with Marion and initiated a siege to the British garrison located at Fort Watson, South Carolina.<sup>71</sup>

Considered a small but pivotal battle by most historians, this clash was critical for many reasons. Fort Watson was part of the extensive interior communication network established in South Carolina and was located about 60 miles from the British stronghold of Charlestown. The

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<sup>69</sup> Steve Rauch, "A Judicious and Gallant Defense, the Second Siege at Augusta, Georgia (the Battles of Fort Grierson and Cornwallis), 22 May - 5 June 1781," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 6-7-8 (Jun-Jul-Aug 2006): 32.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Lee, *The American Revolution in the South* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 223.

<sup>71</sup> Cyrus T. Brady, *Revolutionary Fights and Fighters* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1913), 102.

purpose of the fort was to help secure land and river traffic between the coast and the upcountry region. An American victory would interdict these lines and make other British forces located in the interior extremely vulnerable to attack.

Lee's force, originally sent out to screen the main body from action by Cornwallis, linked up with Marion's men on 14 April and commenced the attack the next day.<sup>72</sup> The commander of the fort, Lieutenant Colonel Watson, was gone when the attack occurred as he and a detachment of men left in early April looking to engage the troops of Marion and Sumter. This shortage of manpower hindered British efforts but their defense doomed when the construction of a pine log tower (later termed the Maham tower) enabled American forces to fire small arms directly into the stockade. The efforts of Lee and Marion to work together resulted in the British garrison surrendering on 23 April. The fort was eventually destroyed and the result was a significant blow to British morale.

Another major significance of the battle was that Greene's combined force of Lee and Marion were able to work so well together. Marion wrote that he was indebted to Lee for his, "advice and indefatigable diligence" in this "tedious operation against as strong a Little post as could be made on the most advantageous spot that could be wished for."<sup>73</sup> Lee was just as laudatory of Marion in his correspondence when he wrote, "Indeed," he would like to be formally under Marion's command in some "in some degree."<sup>74</sup> The ability of these two to be productive as a team was a noteworthy accomplishment.

The team of Lee and Marion were just as effective when they next went into action at the battle of Fort Motte from 8-12 May 1781. The fort, located where the Congaree and Wateree

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<sup>72</sup> Lee, *The American Revolution in the South*, 330.

<sup>73</sup> Marion to Greene, Fort Watson, S.C., 23 April 1781 in Dennis Conrad, ed. *The Papers of Nathanael Greene, Volume 8 30 March-10 July 1781*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 140. (Hereafter cited as *PNG*, Vol 8).

<sup>74</sup> Lee to Greene, [Scott's Lake, S.C.], 23 April 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 140.

Rivers form the Santee River, was the principal communications post and depot of the British from Charlestown into the interior of South Carolina. Greene directed the two to work together once again when he wrote Marion on 7 May 1781, “The Major will Inform you also how far Lieut. Colo. Lee is at Liberty to Continue to Operate with against the fort you was Yesterday firing at.”<sup>75</sup>

Two days into the action, the American force asked for the British to surrender. Their leader, Lieutenant Colonel McPherson, refused saying that assistance was on the way and that they would hold out until it arrived. Realizing that they had no other recourse, the Americans decided to shoot flaming arrows onto the roof of the fort in an attempt to burn out the British occupants. On the morning of 12 May the Americans fired arrows onto the roof and a blaze soon engulfed the fort. The British decided to surrender and at 1PM the battle was over. Soon Major General Greene was on the scene to survey the success of his men but his ulterior motive for showing up was to heal a strained relationship.

One major aspect of Greene’s leadership that made him successful with his partisan leaders was his ability to communicate, both written and orally, in a way that conveyed his sense of appreciation for their efforts. Throughout Greene’s tenure as commander he focused on encouraging his partisans, even when he himself had doubts about the outcome of the campaign. One telling exchange of letters that highlights Greene’s abilities to communicate his feelings is when initially he rebuked Francis Marion in a letter on 4 May 1781 for supposedly hoarding Tory horses when they could better be used by the public.

I am told the militia claim all they take for the Tories: and many of the best horses are collected from the Inhabitants upon this principle. I cannot think the practice warranted either in justice or policy. If the objective of the people is plunder altogether, Government can receive but little benefit from them.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Greene to Marion, Camp at 25 Miles Creek [S.C.], May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 219.

<sup>76</sup> Greene to Marion, From “Camp on the west side of the Wateree,” [S.C.], 4 May 1781, *PNG*, Vol

Marion received this letter and it hurt his sense of pride. He and his men had been battling the British in the swamps and river areas of South Carolina for the better part of a year and, against staggering odds, they had caused much damage to the British cause. Marion wrote back to Greene on 6 May and threatened to resign his militia commission. “This woud not give me any uneasyness as I have somtime Determin to relinquish my command in the maltia as soon as you arrived in it & I wish to do it as soon as this post [Fort Motte] is Either taken or abandoned.”<sup>77</sup>

Greene was taken aback at the letter from Marion. His initial dispatch to Marion was only trying to convey his views that horseflesh in the south was a valuable commodity. Marion was one of Greene’s most valuable commanders and he soon realized that his first letter was taken out of context. Greene immediately wrote Marion and let him know how valuable he was to the Continental cause.

I am sorry the Militia are deserting because there is no greater support. ... You have rendered important services to the public with the Militia under your command; and done great honor to yourself and I would not wish to render your situation less agreeable with them unless it is to answer some great purpose and this I perswade my self you would agree to from a desire to promote the common good.<sup>78</sup>

Marion’s letter back to Greene was not very encouraging.

Yourse of the 9<sup>th</sup> Inst. come to hand & I assure you I am very serious in my intention of relinquishing my Malitia Command, not that I wish to Shrink from my fatigue or trouble, or for any private Interest, but because I found Little is to be done with such men as I have, who Leave me very Often at the very point of Executing a plan & their Late infamous behaviour in Quiting me at a time which required their service must confirm me in my former Intentions. ...I hope by going to the Northward to fall in some employ where I may have and Oportunity of serving the United States, in some way that I cannot be in this Country.<sup>79</sup>

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8, 198-199.

<sup>77</sup> Marion to Greene, Mottes Congarees [S.C], 6<sup>th</sup> May 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 215.

<sup>78</sup> Greene to Marion, Camp at Colonels Creek [S.C], May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 230-231.

<sup>79</sup> Marion to Greene, Motts [S.C.], 11<sup>th</sup> May 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 242.

After receiving this letter Greene realized that he had to do something to keep Marion in the field. He decided to meet face to face with him following Marion and Lee's capture of Fort Motte. They conversed during a victory celebration dinner where Greene convinced Marion to stay and continue making a difference.<sup>80</sup> A serious disaster had been averted.

## **Combined Operations in Georgia and South Carolina**

Following the victory at Fort Motte, Greene wanted to continue his campaign of reducing British and Loyalty garrisons in South Carolina and Georgia. This time he wanted to send "Lighthorse" Lee on another combined operation of partisan and regular forces. The location would be Augusta, Georgia because Greene wanted the forts to his south occupied while he led other forces against the British fort at Ninety-Six, South Carolina. Greene's intent was to launch simultaneous attacks on the forts in Georgia and South Carolina to force the British to try and defend in both areas. Instead of working with Marion, Lee would be partnering up with militia Brigadier General Andrew Pickens.

Pickens was a warrior in every sense of the word. He was initially commissioned a militia captain in 1775 and fought British regular and Tory forces in the region until the Continental defeat at Camden in 1780. Demoralized by the defeat, Pickens made the decision to sit out the rest of the war and was paroled. This parole did not last long when British forces made the mistake of burning his plantation. Pickens, infuriated at the treatment of his family and property, soon found himself back in the conflict. His courageous actions at the Battle of the Cowpens in January 1781 made him famous and resulted in him being promoted to Brigadier General in the South Carolina militia. Following Cowpens, Pickens and his men returned to the

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<sup>80</sup> Hugh F. Rankin, *The Swamp Fox* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1973), 208.

backcountry to defend their families and property before embarking upon the mission to take Augusta, Georgia.

Pickens received orders from Greene telling him, “Lt. Col Lee is on his as our advance for Augusta and the Army for Ninty Six...Lee will be with you in about five days and will bring with him a field piece.”<sup>81</sup> Greene wrote Lee on the same day, “Perform the march as soon as you can without injury to your troops, and make vigorous exertions for the reduction of those posts after your arrival. Should the posts surrender you will take special care that none of the stores are plunder’d.”<sup>82</sup>

Ever mindful of his subordinate’s feelings, Greene wrote to Lee on 21 May that he should, “cultivate a good understanding with General Pickens and the Militia.”<sup>83</sup> Lee’s and Pickens’ two forces eventually linked up around 22 May and, with input from local partisan Elijah Clarke, made the decision to attack Fort Grierson on 24 May. The attack commenced on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> and soon afterward the American forces found themselves in possession of the fort with only a few casualties while British Loyalist forces sustained at least 30 killed. The remainder of the Loyalists made their way to nearby Fort Cornwallis.

On 28 and 29 May, the British commanding officer at Fort Cornwallis, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Brown, launched two night counter attacks against American forces in an attempt to break their perimeter surrounding the fort and destroy a tower that was being built by the Continentals. These attacks were unsuccessful and the Americans prepared to launch a siege of the fort. Major General Greene was unhappy with these developments because he was hoping the forts at Augusta would fall quickly as he was encountering problems at Ninety-Six. Lee and

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<sup>81</sup> Greene to Pickens, Camp at Ancroms Plantation on the Congaree, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1781 *PNG*, Vol 8, 272.

<sup>82</sup> Greene to Lee, Camp at Ancroms Plantation on the Congaree, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 272.

<sup>83</sup> Greene to Lee, Camp on East side of Saluda from Frydays Ferry to Ninty Six, SC, May 21<sup>st</sup>,

Pickens both wrote to Greene and explained that the low caliber of men on the expedition was precluding them from achieving the desired results.

For the next few days the Americans launched a barrage of shells from their six-pounder until the British finally surrendered on 5 June 1781. This was a momentous achievement for Lee and Pickens. They wrote to Greene on the day of victory and alluded to the “judicious, vigilant and gallant conduct of the Garrison deprived us of many advantages which we wished to have seized in the course of our operations....”<sup>84</sup>

Major General Greene had to have been pleased with the results. Not only was the forward operating base of the British knocked out but the Rebels gained control of the Savannah River and the major trade routes in the area.<sup>85</sup> Even though Greene’s twenty eight day siege at Ninety Six was a failure it really didn’t matter in the big scheme of things.<sup>86</sup> The loss of Augusta meant that the Ninety Six fortification was no longer a tenable position and as a result that fort was abandoned in July. When the British evacuated Ninety Six so did their control of the interior of South Carolina. However, this doesn’t mean that the British had given up on the prospects of retaking South Carolina.

To counteract the successes of the Greene’s regular and partisan forces, the British command replaced the very ill Lieutenant Colonel Francis Rawdon with Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Stewart. Rawdon, a twenty-seven year old officer who had soldiered in the Revolutionary War since the inception of fighting, was considered one of the better officers in the

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1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 290.

<sup>84</sup> Pickens and Lee to Greene, “Camp in Augusta,” Ga., 5 June 1781, *PNG*, Vol 8, 351-352.

<sup>85</sup> Rauch: 47.

<sup>86</sup> John W. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 157.

British ranks.<sup>87</sup> His failure to contain Greene in South Carolina and the subsequent losses of British interior forts led to his forces evacuating to the safe confines of Charlestown.

Greene had bested Rawdon by engaging him in a war of exhaustion. By employing this strategy Greene was simply wearing out his opponent. Greene's plan of engaging the British in conventional battles while simultaneously relying upon his partisan forces to conduct guerrilla style operations against the Crown's interior lines of communication was bringing the Americans closer to victory every day. By severing these lines, the British forces, both Loyalist and Regulars, found themselves isolated and subject to attack at any time. In short, Greene was using his forces to cripple the British's will to fight.<sup>88</sup>

Before embarking upon another summer campaign against the British forces Greene realized that his forces needed to rest and resupply. As he wrote to North Carolina Governor Thomas Burke on 16 July 1781, "The Army has sufferd incredible hardships and requires a little relaxation."<sup>89</sup> For the next six weeks Greene's men retired to the relatively peaceful confines of the High Hills on the Santee River while the retiring British forces were battling heat, mosquitoes, and humidity.<sup>90</sup>

While in camp Greene wrote to his partisan leaders to compliment them on their performance of the past few weeks. Greene wrote to Marion that, "The gallantry and good conduct of your men reflects the highest honor of your brigade. I only lament that men who spilt their blood in such noble exertions to serve their Country could not have met with more deserved success."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Greene to Burke, Head Quarters at the High Hills of Santee [S.C.] July 16<sup>th</sup> 1781, in Dennis Conrad, ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene 11 July 1781- 2 December 1781*, Vol. 9 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 20. (Hereafter cited as PNG, Vol 9).

<sup>90</sup> Golway, 275.

<sup>91</sup> Greene to Marion, Head Quarters High Hills Santee, [S.C.], July 21<sup>st</sup> 1781, *PNG*, Vol 9, 54.

Greene wrote to Sumter on the same day and highlighted how the successes of the partisan forces were affecting British morale. “The damage the enemy has sustaind in the loss of Stores[,] and &c will have its influence upon their Army and se[r]ve to damp their spirits while it will cheer the hopes and brighten the prospects of ours.”<sup>92</sup> Another historian wrote,

Perhaps the most important of Marion’s services during the summer of 1781 was the collecting of food and fodder for the use of Greene’s troops – and also for the purpose of preventing the British from getting them. Driving cattle and carrying off supplies of corn, rice, and salt was hardly glorious work. But it had to be done, and Marion’s men rode widely through the country south of the Santee on their foraging missions.<sup>93</sup>

Receiving information that British forces were demoralized and susceptible to being overwhelmed, Greene made the decision to attack at Eutaw Springs. This battle would be a continuation of Greene strategy of combining regular and partisan forces. He wrote to Marion, “I beg you will please to form a junction with us as soon as possible; and with our collective force I think we can give a good account of them.”<sup>94</sup>

Greene’s force numbered roughly 2,000 men and they were desperate for a victory. They were low on rations and had had little rest marching to the field of battle. The plan hinged on the partisan forces of Marion and Pickens occupying the front ranks of the formation with regular forces (cavalry and infantry) supporting on the flanks and in the subsequent lines of defense.<sup>95</sup> The partisans would have to give a good account of themselves before falling back behind the Continental regulars if the Americans were to succeed.

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<sup>92</sup> Greene to Sumter, Head Quarters at the High Hills Santee [S.C], July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 9, 55.

<sup>93</sup> George W. Kyte, "Francis Marion as an Intelligence Officer," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* October 1976, 221.

<sup>94</sup> Greene to Marion, Head Quarters Mabricks Creek[S.C], 6 miles below Col Thomsons, Septr 5<sup>th</sup> 1781, *PNG*, Vol 9, 298.

<sup>95</sup> Morrill, 167.

The battle started off early in the morning of 8 September, and the Americans experienced early success as they broke the initial defenses of the British and made their way into the British camp. Unfortunately for Greene, his deprived troops, who were unaccustomed to seeing retreating British forces and desperately hungry, followed up their success by plundering the camp of food and rum. The British Army, under the able leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, was able to regroup and force Greene's men out of the camp and off the battlefield. However, this was done at great cost. "The British had suffered heavy losses; about eighty-five killed, three hundred fifty one wounded, and an amazingly high number of missing, some two hundred and fifty seven."<sup>96</sup> These casualties were significant since the overall British force numbered about 2,000. Once again the Americans left a battlefield in the hands of the British but only after they had inflicted significant casualties and gained a strategic victory.

Following the battle Greene penned a note to the Governor of South Carolina praising the performance of the partisan forces. "The Militia under [Gen Francis] Marion, [Gen Andrew] Pickens, & [the Marquis] de Malmedy, did honor to this class of Soldier."<sup>97</sup> This last major battle in South Carolina completely broke the British hold in the South and six weeks later Cornwallis succumbed to Washington at Yorktown. While the official peace treaty wouldn't be signed for another two years, the Americans had gained their independence.

In the two years between the Battle of Eutaw Springs and the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty, Greene found himself leading a rabble of Regulars and partisans ravaged by disease and trying to take advantage of their vulnerable Loyalist enemies. Greene pled with Congress and local officials for supplies and men to police the Southern Department in order to restore some kind of order.

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<sup>96</sup> Golway, 283.

<sup>97</sup> Greene to Governor John Rutledge, Burdells House 6 Miles from Eutaw [S.C.], Sep the 9<sup>th</sup> 1781, *PNG*, Vol 9, 308.

Our sick and wounded have suffered greatly. The extent of our Hospitals, the malignity of disorders & increasing sick since the battle of Eutaw, together with the numerous wounded on hand, the little means we had to provide for them...have left our sick and & wounded in a most deplorable situation and numbers of brave fellows who bled in the cause of their Country have been eat up with maggots& perished in that miserable situation.<sup>98</sup>

Greene continued later on his report that, "Our force here is too small and sickly to attempt anything further until reinforcements arrive, unless it is in the partizan way, in which I hope we shall be able to effect something cleaver..."<sup>99</sup> Luckily for Greene and the Southern Department, the British were content with moving their soldiers to their coastal enclaves in Savannah, Charlestown and Wilmington.<sup>100</sup> This was the beginning of the end for the British campaign for the colonies.

## Conclusion

Why did American forces prevail against the British in the Southern Department during the American Revolution? There are many reasons but they all revolve around the incredible leadership and vision of Major General Nathanael Greene. As soon as Greene became the commander of the Southern Department he began to think about how he would want to shape operations against British regular and Loyalist forces. He decided early on that he could only be successful by forging an operational relationship with the partisan forces of Marion, Pickens and Sumter. This union of American regular and local partisan forces, or implementation of combined warfare, was the crucial link that enabled Greene to eventually defeat British forces located in the interior regions of South Carolina and Georgia.

Greene was able to make the most of his association with the partisans for three major reasons. First, he understood the nature and history of the conflict in the Carolina and Georgia

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<sup>98</sup> Greene to Thomas McKean, President of the Continental Congress, Head Quarters High Santee [S.C.], October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *PNG*, Vol 9, 482.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 483.

regions. These partisans were proud of their roots and savored the opportunity to take on the oppressive British regime. Greene's awareness comes through in his letters. This is the second factor in Greene's effectiveness.

From the very outset of his term as commander, Greene went out of his way to write to the partisan leaders and let them know that he appreciated all of their efforts. His ability to communicate in an effective manner ingratiated him to the irregular leaders, especially Francis Marion. Lastly, he took advantage of this bond by coordinating several joint and innovative operations against the British strongholds of Fort Watson, Augusta and Eutaw Springs. His flexible command and control style empowered his regulars and partisans to achieve victory on several occasions.

Greene used his relationship with the partisans to provide him three major capabilities. These forces gave Greene incredible situational awareness by transmitting voluminous amounts of intelligence through regular written correspondence. On numerous occasions the partisan leaders provided Greene with enemy troop and supply movements. This intelligence shaped Greene's decision-making process on where to commit continental assets and where to focus partisan reconnaissance.

Partisan reconnaissance and screening operations were the second major capability provided to Greene. Throughout the campaign, but especially during the retreat to the Dan River, partisan elements provided Greene with crucial reconnaissance and scouting of enemy capabilities. In many cases these elements engaged with British troops in order to provide freedom of movement to their Continental brethren. In addition to their role of fighting the British the partisan forces were adept at providing Greene and his Continentals with key logistical support like food while the Continentals reciprocated with ammunition.

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<sup>100</sup> Morrill, 169.

The last major capability that the partisan forces brought to the relationship was their ability to fight and be decisive. On numerous occasions they proved to be valuable warriors on sieges, assaults, and in traditional battle. While some partisan leaders and their followers were not always cooperative, many of the partisans could be counted on. The British regulars, augmented with Loyalist volunteers, were never able to match up either in numbers or military presence.

A clear and thorough examination of the facts really casts doubt on whether or not the British Army could have quelled the rebellion. At best they were only able to build and occupy forts that were susceptible to sieges and vulnerable to being having their supply and communication lines interdicted by partisan forces. Cornwallis was simply not resourced with enough personnel to accomplish the mission charged to him by the British government. That fact, coupled with the British Parliament's thirst for a rapid solution to the American rebellion, eerily resembles the United States of America's current struggles in Iraq.

Greene's successes as a leader of conventional and unconventional soldiers, and British failures, in a complex and hostile insurgency provide many valuable lessons the United States military can apply in today's contemporary operating environment. One of the main lessons derived from the British collapse was that Loyalist support wasn't enough to defeat Patriot elements. These Loyalists were unable to successfully establish a network of garrisoned outposts that could protect interior lines of operations. Once Greene established some successes against these outposts, many of the people loyal to the Crown never felt secure enough to assert their allegiance in public. They felt ignored and vulnerable, especially when Cornwallis focused his forces on destroying Greene as he retreated into Virginia in early 1781. Meanwhile, those who had not chosen sides were soon convinced that the British would never win.

This is a similar problem facing the United States' efforts in Iraq. The security situation in the country is chaotic and many of the citizens in Iraq are waiting to see who will win before choosing a side to support. The United States has established a network of super forward

operating bases that are vulnerable to attack and do nothing to provide the local populace security on a consistent basis.

The British shortage of manpower is another problem that mirrors U.S. struggles in the Middle East. The British over reliance on Loyalist troops was a doomed strategy. Loyalist troops were never able to consistently secure lines of communication, rear areas or portions of the countryside that were cleared by regular troops. These failures enabled Greene to maintain the initiative against his opponent by conducting ambushes against vulnerable British supply or personnel columns with his partisan forces. Greene's resilient group of fighters executed a strategy of exhaustion against the British.

This is exactly the same issue confronting American combat troops operating in cities and supply columns moving along main supply routes in Iraq. Iraqi national forces are not performing at a high enough level to deter those terrorists and foreign fighters who are determined to kill Americans and innocent Iraqi citizens. They believe that the longer they can prolong the fighting the more they will weaken political resolve.

Until this state of affairs is rectified, the situation in Iraq may end up mirroring another empire's ignominious defeat of over two hundred years ago. Only time will tell if American efforts in Iraq will result in victory. However, it would benefit today's generation of military and political leaders to study this portion of American history so that lessons learned long ago will not have to be repeated.

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